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ABSTRACT

This booklet offers guidance to parents in caring for their newborn babies. Advice is given on the following topics: (1) newborn health screening; (2) what a healthy newborn looks like; (3) newborn reflexes; (4) baby checkups; (5) fathers' role; (6) the baby blues; (7) sleeping position; (8) breast milk; (9) breast feeding; (10) bottle feeding; (11) checkups and shots; (12) what it's like to be a newborn; (13) changing diapers; (14) keeping a memory book; (15) installing car seats; (16) newborns' brains; (17) guiding babies every day; (18) babies' people skills; (19) learning to communicate; (20) why babies cry; (21) ways to soothe babies; (22) preparing the baby's bath; (23) bathing the baby; and (24) being gentle when bathing the baby. Information resources for families conclude the booklet. (EV)

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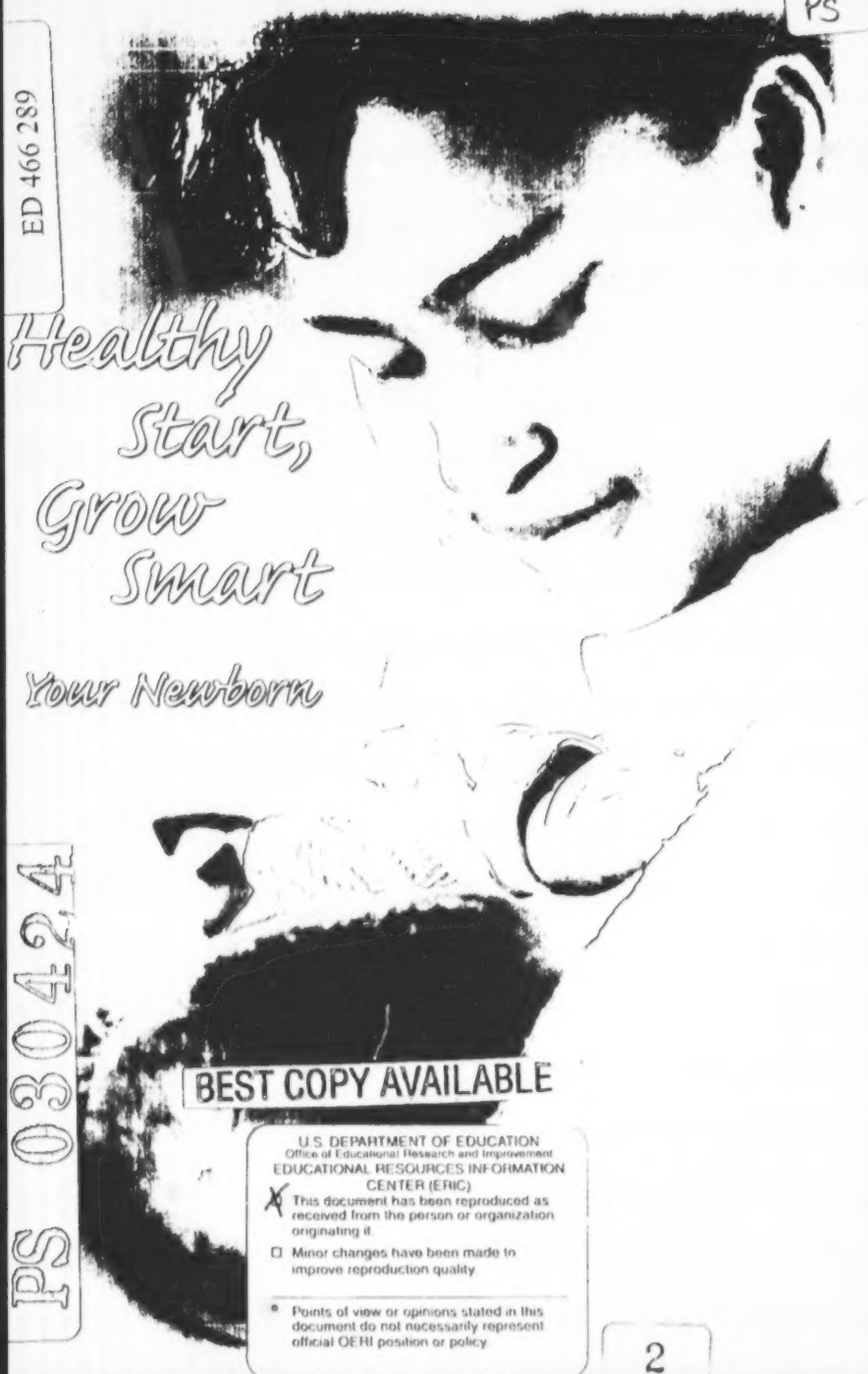

Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Newborn

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Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Newborn

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Congratulations on Your New Baby!

You have a new baby, and you are a proud parent. Do you sometimes feel excited but also a little nervous about taking care of your new baby? Then you are like most parents. Even in the first days of life, your baby is starting to find out who you are.

Research has found that very young babies know the difference between their parents and strangers. There are many changes that take place and new things to learn when you become a parent. It doesn't happen overnight. Be patient with yourself. The love you have for your baby will help you learn to become a good parent. Just as no two babies are exactly alike, no one takes care of a baby in exactly the same way. Be a loving parent. Do your best. Enjoy your baby! Ask questions if you need help.

Newborn Health Screening

Your baby is tested for certain medical conditions when she is born. Many conditions can be treated if they are found early enough. Early treatment means your baby can grow up healthier.

Newborn tests are given in the hospital right after birth. The tests are given again at your baby's first checkup.

The second series of tests is important. It must be done one or two weeks after the first tests. Be sure to take your baby to the doctor or clinic for this second series of tests. At this visit, your doctor will also check other things to make sure your baby is doing fine.

A small amount of your baby's blood will be taken. It will be tested and you will be told if there is any cause for concern.

Your doctor or nurse can answer questions about the tests.

If you don't have health insurance for your baby, you can learn about resources in your state by contacting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Insure Kids Now Program.

To learn more, call 1-877-KIDSNOW or visit their Web site at www.insurekidsnow.gov/.

What a Healthy Newborn Looks Like

Newborn babies don't usually look like the cute babies in diaper ads. Newborns' heads are often more pointed than round. Their skin may be wrinkly and reddish in color. This is normal.

In the center of your baby's head is a "soft spot" where the skull bones have not yet joined. This allows your baby's head to be flexible during the birthing process. The skull bones will grow together to cover this spot as your baby grows. Meantime, the soft spot allows your baby's brain to grow.

Sometimes there are dark red patches on the baby's eyelids. They can also be on the bridge of the nose or back of the neck. No one knows what causes these. They usually go away during the first year.

Some babies are born bald, some have thin hair, and others are born with thick, dark hair. For many babies, this first hair rubs off. For others, the color may change.

Eye color can also change after birth. Eye color is usually set by the end of the first year.

The umbilical cord that is left on the navel at birth will drop off in five to 10 days. The place where it falls off will become your baby's belly button.

Sometimes baby girls bleed from the vagina. Sometimes boys or girls will have swollen breasts. They may even produce a few drops of milk at birth. Hormones from the mother cause this. The discharge is harmless and will soon disappear.

Newborn Reflexes

Babies have special reflexes that last only a few months. It helps to know what the reflexes are so you are not alarmed when they occur.

The following reflexes are normal for newborns:

- ☆ Moro or "startle" reflex: This occurs when your baby's head shifts position quickly. Or when her head falls backward. Or when your baby is startled by something loud. She will react by throwing out her arms and legs and extending her neck. Your baby will then quickly bring her arms together. She may cry when doing this. This reflex should go away after two months.
- ☆ Rooting reflex: This is how your baby hunts for her mother's breast. If you gently stroke the side of her cheek with your finger, she will turn her head toward your finger. This lasts for three to four months.
- ☆ Grasp reflex: Your baby will clench her fist around anything pressed into the palm of her hand. You can show this to a big brother or sister. Say, "The baby wants to hold on to your finger." This reflex goes away at five to six months.
- ☆ Stepping reflex: If you hold a newborn baby upright under her arms with her feet on a hard surface, her feet will make a stepping action. This happens even though it is a long time before she is ready to stand or walk. This usually lasts a couple of months.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about your baby's reflexes.

Your Baby Depends on You for Checkups

Your baby needs medical checkups during her first days, weeks and months so the doctor can see if she is growing right. The way your baby grows in her first year can affect her health for life.

Checkups are a normal and important thing for babies. Even though your baby seems healthy, she should get checkups at one to two weeks of age, and at two, four, six, nine, and 12 months of age.

Your baby's first visit to the doctor will be a week or two after birth. Ask your doctor for the results of the hearing screening if it was done in the hospital. If a hearing test was not done, ask your doctor for a referral for the test. You need to know as soon as possible if your baby has hearing problems. If she does, she may need special help now so she can communicate with people. This will help her when she learns to talk and read.

At each checkup, the doctor or nurse will:

- ☆ Examine your baby's head, eyes, ears, heart, lungs and other body parts
- ☆ Measure your baby's length, weight and head size
- ☆ Ask about your baby's hearing and vision
- ☆ Ask you questions about how she eats, sleeps and acts
- ☆ Give you information about how a baby develops and grows

A Special Word to Fathers

As a father, you have an important role to play in taking care of your baby. Your baby needs you. And mom needs you to share many of the responsibilities of taking care of your new baby. When you do things with your baby, you and your baby get closer. You and your baby form a bond that helps her feel safe and happy.

You may feel nervous around a newborn. Or you may be afraid to touch your baby because you have never done it before. The best way for you to get over the uneasiness is to hold your baby.

Here are some things you can do to be a part of your baby's life. You will find that the more you do with her, the more comfortable you will be.

- ☆ Hold and cuddle your baby.
- ☆ Smile and laugh with your baby.
- ☆ Talk to your baby. Your baby will quickly learn your voice and know that you are her daddy.
- ☆ Change your baby's diapers.
- ☆ Cuddle with mom and your baby during breastfeeding.
- ☆ When mom's breast milk or formula has been put in a bottle, you can give your baby the bottle. Cuddle with and talk and sing to your baby during bottle time.
- ☆ Take your baby for a walk. Babies love the sights and sounds of the outdoors.
- ☆ Play with your baby.

The Baby Blues
(Take Time for Yourself)

Some new mothers go through what is known as the "baby blues," or postpartum blues.

This happens because your body goes through many changes during pregnancy. These "blue" feelings may happen to you before your baby is born or afterward.

You may feel discouraged or tense, or feel like crying over little things that would not usually bother you. Don't worry. These feelings are common. They won't last forever.

You may also have trouble sleeping. If you do, at least take time to rest. You are under a lot of stress. Getting some rest may help you handle your feelings.

It may help to talk about your feelings with others. Talk with family and friends. You can find out if there are any parent groups in your community. Or contact the National Mental Health Association for a list of local affiliates at 1-800-969-NMHA or visit their Web site at www.nmha.org/. Churches and religious organizations in your community may be able to help you find someone to talk to. You may also want to talk to your doctor.

If you have friends or family who will help you with meals, housework or shopping, now is the time to ask them. It is also a good time to let your baby's father help out.

Your Baby Should Sleep on Her Back

You want to keep your baby safe when she sleeps. Most babies are healthy and have no problems when sleeping. But sometimes babies die in their sleep. This is called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or crib death. Doctors have not found out what causes SIDS.

Research shows that babies who sleep on their backs are less likely to die from SIDS. If your baby has a health problem, your doctor may tell you to put her in another position. Otherwise, always put your baby to sleep on her back.

Other factors in lowering the danger of SIDS are:

- ☆ **Breastfeeding**–Your breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. Breast milk helps protect your baby from many illnesses, as well as SIDS.
- ☆ **Smoke-free environment**–Don't smoke around your baby. Don't take her around others who smoke. Babies in smoke-free homes have fewer colds and infections.
- ☆ **Closeness**–Keep your sleeping baby nearby. It's good for your baby to learn to sleep in her own crib. Be sure you can hear her if she cries or is in distress.
- ☆ **Bedding**–Be sure your baby is sleeping on a firm mattress. Don't put your baby to sleep on soft or fluffy things, such as a pillow, quilt or waterbed. Keep stuffed animals out of the crib at sleep time.
- ☆ **Temperature**–Make sure your baby is warm but not too hot.
- ☆ **Doctor visits**–Take your baby in for her regular checkups. Any time your baby seems sick or has trouble breathing, take her to the doctor or clinic.

Breast Milk Is Best for Your Baby

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It is the only food your baby needs during her first six months. A baby is not ready for other foods, except formula, during the first few months of life.

A breastfed baby usually doesn't need water. However, you may give her water if the weather is hot and your home is not air-conditioned. Don't add sugar or honey to the water. Don't give flavored drinks or soda pop to your baby. Don't give fruit juice to a newborn baby.

Breast milk is best for your baby's health. Breastfed babies don't get sick as often, and they usually don't have as many allergies. They may even be smarter! Also, breastfeeding seems to protect mothers from certain types of health problems.

Mothers often find that breast milk is the easiest way to feed their babies. Also, there is no cost.

You don't have to wash and sterilize bottles and nipples when you breast-feed. This leaves more time for other things. Breastfeeding your baby can even help you lose some of the weight you gained when you were pregnant. Breastfeeding can be a pleasing experience for baby and mom.

Breastfeeding Is Natural

Babies need to eat often — every 90 minutes to two hours. Feed your baby when she begins to show signs of hunger, such as rooting or sucking on her lips, fingers or fist. Try to feed her before she cries. Feeding your baby often won't spoil her. It will help you learn to become more aware of your baby's needs.

Don't limit feeding times. Babies need different amounts of food at different times of the day, just as grown people do.

Relax! Take your time. The more you nurse your baby, the more milk you will have. Do not give your baby formula or water. If you do, you will make less milk. If you think you do not have enough milk, nurse more often and nurse longer.

To learn more about breastfeeding, you may want to contact your local health department, WIC clinic, hospital, La Leche league or doctor. You can call La Leche league at 1-800-LALECHE, or visit their Web site at www.lalecheleague.org/.

Breastfeeding is natural, but it takes a little time for babies and mothers to learn what works best for them. You may have sore nipples when you first start breastfeeding. The pain can be reduced if your baby is held properly when attached to the breast.

Here are some useful tips:

☆ Hold your baby's tummy to your tummy, baby's chin to your breast. You can do this sitting or lying down. Hold your breast in a "C-hold," with your thumb on top and fingers underneath. Tickle your baby's lips with your nipple until her mouth opens wide. Quickly bring her onto the breast. Allow the tip of your baby's nose and chin to touch the breast.

☆ Make sure your baby's mouth covers your entire nipple and much of the darker part around the nipple. Your baby's upper and lower lips should be rolled out. If the lips are not rolled out, break the suction by slipping your finger between the baby's gums and your breast. Then latch the baby on again.

☆ Offer your baby both breasts at each feeding. Your baby will tell you when she is finished by "falling off" the breast.

☆ After feeding, rub a few drops of breast milk onto your nipples. Let them air dry. Then cover the nipple with nursing pads, a bra or clothing. This will help keep them from getting too dry.

Your nipples may be tender in the first few days of breastfeeding. This is common. By and large, tenderness goes away once the milk begins to flow. If you have a lot of pain, call a breastfeeding counselor or your doctor. Your doctor or counselor can also help if you have cracked or bleeding nipples. If it doesn't feel right, then it probably isn't right.

If you are out with your baby, you can still breastfeed. You may want to take along a receiving blanket or shawl with which to cover up.

If you have to be away from your baby, you can still give her breast milk. You can withdraw or "express" breast milk by hand or with a breast pump into a sterile container. Then someone else can give it to her in a bottle.

It is important for you to have adequate, high-quality nutrition and drink enough water. You should avoid drugs while breastfeeding unless the doctor specifically tells you to take a certain medication even though you are breastfeeding.

Tips on Bottle Feeding

If you bottle feed your baby, ask your doctor what kind of formula is best for her. There are three ways formula is sold:

- ☆ Powdered formula is the cheapest. You have to mix the powder with sterilized water.
- ☆ Concentrated formula is a liquid, but it is thick and must be mixed with sterilized water. It costs more than powdered formula.
- ☆ Ready-to-feed formula comes already mixed with water. It costs the most but is the easiest to use.

Follow formula mixing instructions carefully. There is a date on the formula. Don't use the formula after this date. The formula will not be safe to give to your baby after this date.

Wash reusable bottles made of plastic or glass. Also wash all equipment used to prepare formula. Use hot soapy water. Rinse the bottles in clean tap water. Then boil them five minutes in a covered pot or sterilizer.

To prepare formula, boil water for five minutes and cool it before mixing it with powdered or concentrated formula. If you are using bottles with disposable liners, throw away the liner after use. Store prepared formula in the refrigerator and use it within 48 hours.

Heat a bottle of formula by running hot water over it. Never heat formula in the microwave. It can get too hot. Check the temperature by shaking a few drops on your wrist. When it feels warm (not hot) on your wrist, it is cool enough to give to your baby.

When feeding your baby, hold her head a little higher than her tummy. Hold the bottom of the bottle up so that the nipple stays full of formula. This way, your baby doesn't swallow air and spit up. Never prop the bottle, because your baby could choke. Always hold your baby while you feed her. Throw out any formula left in the bottle after a feeding.

Feeding time is more than just satisfying your baby's hunger. It is also a time to bond with and get to know your infant. Dad, grandparents and other family members can bond too by feeding and cuddling the baby.

Checkups and Shots

At checkups your baby will be given shots (immunizations). Your baby will get her first shot in the hospital at birth. The shots help protect your baby from diseases such as hepatitis, measles, mumps and chicken pox. Your doctor can answer any questions you may have. Without the shots, your baby can get sick and even die.

Some babies can get sick from the shots. Ask your doctor or nurse what signs to look for after your baby gets a shot so you will know if your baby needs medical care.

Keep a record or write down what happens at your baby's checkups. This record will help you and your doctor know about your baby's development and what is best for your baby. Be sure to ask your doctor any questions you have about your baby's health and growth.

What's It Like To Be a Newborn?

- ☆ I need others to take care of me.
- ☆ I can't decide things for myself.
- ☆ I need someone to love, feed, hold and play with me.
- ☆ I like to feel warm, and I don't like lots of noise.
- ☆ I like to be held very gently and very close.
- ☆ My face may be wrinkled, puffy or red, and I may have a large head, but I'm normal.
- ☆ I like to sleep a lot.
- ☆ I am hungry every few hours.
- ☆ I may be fussy and cry a lot.
- ☆ I need my diapers changed as soon as they are wet or soiled.

Changing Baby's Diaper

Get everything you need before changing your baby's diaper. Once you start changing, don't take your eyes off your baby even for a second. Babies wiggle and move. They can get hurt or fall in an instant.

To change your baby's diaper:

- ☆ It's best to wash your hands before changing your newborn's diaper. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water after each diaper change, too.
- ☆ Lay your baby on a clean surface. Take along a blanket or changing pad when you go out.
- ☆ Remove the dirty diaper.
- ☆ Use a washcloth dipped in clean, lukewarm water. Wash all the area on your baby that the diaper covers. Wipe from front to back to avoid infection.
- ☆ Every time you change a diaper, clean your baby's umbilical cord. Use a cotton swab that you have dipped in rubbing alcohol. Squeeze it so that it is almost dry. Gently clean off the sticky stuff around the cord where it touches your baby's tummy. The cord will fall off by itself in five to 10 days. Your baby may cry when you touch the wet swab to the cord. Be gentle. Check with your doctor if your baby cries at other times when you touch the cord. Check with your doctor if the skin around the cord is red.
- ☆ Now put a clean diaper on your baby. If you are using pins, put your hand between the pin and your baby's skin. Do not let the diaper cover up the umbilical cord.

Newborns use about 10 diapers every day. Change them as soon as they are wet. This can prevent rashes. Have a place to put the soiled diapers and washcloths.

Keep a Memory Book

Start a memory book. It will be fun for you and your baby to look at as she is growing up. You can use a scrapbook, a notebook or any book with blank pages.

Save the front page of the newspaper from the day she was born. Your child can look at it when she is older and find out all the things that happened on that important day. Be sure to put in birth announcements, too.

Write down all the great "firsts" for your baby. Things like the first time she smiles, sits up, crawls, walks, talks or does anything else special.

Put in photos of your baby as she grows. When she gets older, you can put in drawings she makes and, later, things she writes. You can write down cute things she does and says, as well as things she learns and what she likes and doesn't like.

Write down dates and symptoms when your baby gets sick. Also write down monthly weights and heights, and when each tooth comes in. Keep track of your baby's shots as well.

The memory book is a good record of your child's early years. You and your child can enjoy it together as she grows up. Later on, the book will help her learn about her past.

Install Car Seats Carefully

Starting the day she is born, any time you take your baby anywhere in a car, put her in a car safety seat. This is best for your baby, and all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Territories have child passenger safety laws.

Your baby will need different kinds of car safety seats as she grows. Right now, she should be in one that is made for a newborn baby. The safety seat should be placed in the back seat, facing the rear. Infants should never be placed in the front seat.

Make sure the car safety seat fits your car. If it doesn't, exchange it. Make sure it is fastened in the car securely. Make sure the straps that go around your baby fit her snugly.

Avoid used car seats since they may be damaged.

Make sure any safety seat you buy comes with directions on how to install it. Make sure you understand the directions.

If you cannot afford a safety seat, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration can provide information on resources that help low-income families purchase or borrow child car seats. You may call them at 1-800-424-9393 or visit their Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

Wonders of the Brain

Your baby's brain started growing before birth. When she was born her brain was about one-fourth its adult size. Your baby's brain will grow at its fastest until she is about three years old.

How a baby's brain grows depends on many things. Some things are inherited from parents. Others depend on your baby's health, nutrition, experiences and relationships. The way your baby's brain develops depends, in part, on what you say and do with her.

Your baby's brain has many, many neurons or brain cells. The types of activities your baby has with objects and people stimulate these neurons. This allows the neurons to make important connections in the brain. Everyday activities determine how these connections are formed. Activities like holding and playing with toys or listening to people talk are important.

This is why your child needs stimulation and play. She needs to know you love her. She needs to be able to explore and find things out. She needs you to talk to her and interact with her. These things will all help the part of brain development that depends on experience.

How should you provide these experiences for your baby? There isn't any one answer. We do know that babies develop better:

- ☆ When they hear language
- ☆ When they have experiences with toys or objects
- ☆ When they know that people love them and pay attention to them

What's important is to find activities that you and your child enjoy doing together. When you do this, you are not just having fun with your baby. You are helping her brain grow.

Guide Your Baby Every Day

Babies learn by exploring the things around them. Show your baby how to look at, listen to, touch or smell something new or different. Hold your baby so she can see things. Help her hold objects like her socks or a rattle. As she grows, give her safe objects to feel, shake or put into her mouth.

- ☆ Be your baby's teacher. She will see how you react to things. When you get excited about a toy or object, she'll get excited too. As she grows, show her how things work—for example, how doors open and close. Talk about what you are doing. For example, "I am putting the food in the pot to cook it."
- ☆ When a baby is learning something new, it helps her to try it again and again. With your help and support this can be fun, and your baby will like trying new things.
- ☆ Protect your baby from harsh disapproval, teasing or punishment. A baby doesn't understand right from wrong. She doesn't know what things are dangerous for her to do. Watch her to keep her safe. Remove her from situations where she can be hurt or injured.
- ☆ Talk and sing to your baby. Even before she is able to speak, this helps her develop language skills. Babies learn best when you talk to them.
- ☆ Read to your baby from the earliest months of her life and continue this habit as she grows.

Babies Have People Skills, Too

From the start, your baby is interested in your face. She notices your expressions and tone of voice. She reacts to your emotions. For example, when you say something in a soft and loving way, she will relax and feel more secure.

Scientists have learned that babies show emotions as early as when they are one month old. Something else scientists have learned is that feeling good helps babies learn better.

Why? Happy babies are more alert, attentive and responsive. Babies remember things better when they are happy and at ease. The way you hold and talk to your baby can help her feel happy.

Babies who are alert and feeling good are more likely to look at things, explore and play. They will pay attention more. For example, they will try to make new things happen with toys or make sounds with people. This helps them learn and remember new things.

Brief periods of distress or difficulty will occur. These will not harm a child. Short periods of negative emotions can be helpful for your baby. You should do something quickly to help her feel better. From this she will learn you care about what she tries to tell you. Long periods of negative emotion, like crying, can do harm.

In the first month, the negative emotion that occurs is distress or a response to pain. Later, she will show sadness and anger. Next comes fear. All people have these emotions to protect themselves. Help your baby be at ease with having emotions. Respond to her emotions in a warm and loving way.

You can tell what your baby is feeling by changes in her facial expression. You can also see what she is feeling by her posture, movements and the sounds she makes.

Learning to Communicate

It will be months before your baby says her first word. But babies start learning about language much earlier.

Even in the first few weeks after birth, your baby is learning about language. Very young babies can tell the difference between speech and other sounds. They can tell the difference between the voices of men and the voices of women. They even know the voices of their own mothers. A baby can tell the voice of her mother from the voices of other women. Researchers think babies are able to do this because of the way specific parts of their brains work.

Babies can also communicate long before they speak. They use movements and sounds to let you know what they want or don't want. Some people refer to these as a baby's "signals".

Right now, your baby can tell you if she needs something by fussing or crying. She can also let you know when she likes something or someone by looking intently. Babies learn best how to tell parents what they like or don't like when they begin to see that parents respond to them in positive ways.

Even before she can speak, you need to talk to your baby. Even though there are differences among individuals, babies whose parents talk to them talk sooner. They also have larger vocabularies. Talking to babies gives them language skills that will help them learn more easily when they get to school. Hearing words on the radio or TV is not very helpful to babies learning language. Your baby benefits from having you up close smiling, talking and singing.

Babies Cry for Lots of Reasons

Crying is the way newborns communicate. Your new baby cries to let you know she needs or wants something.

The first thing to try when she cries is to feed her. By noticing when she wants to be fed and when she doesn't, you will learn which cries mean that she is hungry, uncomfortable or wants attention. Sometimes she will want to be held. Sometimes she wants a dry diaper. Sometimes she is tired or bored.

As you and your baby get to know each other, you will sometimes be able to tell the difference between each kind of crying. You can then try to give her what she needs.

Taking care of your baby when she cries will not spoil her. It will help your baby feel loved and secure.

Smile, touch and talk to your baby as often as possible. Do this when you feed her, change her diaper or give her a bath. Your baby will learn that she can rely on you to take care of her.

Ways to Soothe Your Baby

Sometimes babies cry even when they have been fed, have clean diapers and are healthy. If your baby is crying because she needs comfort, there are many things you can do. Every baby is different.

Here are things you can try to find out what calms your baby down.

- ☆ Rock your baby in your arms or while sitting in a rocking chair.
- ☆ Stroke your baby's head very gently, or lightly pat her back or chest.
- ☆ Make soft noises, such as cooing, to let your baby know you are there and you care. Talk to your baby.
- ☆ Softly sing to your baby or play soft music.
- ☆ Wrap her up in a baby blanket (but not too tightly).

If your baby keeps crying after you have tried everything, stay calm. Babies know when you are upset. No matter how stressed you are, **never shake your baby**. Shaking your baby can cause blindness, brain damage or even death. If you need a break, call a relative, neighbor or friend to help. All babies cry. You will not be able to comfort your baby every time. That does not mean you are a bad parent. Do the best you can to comfort your baby.

Here's a simple tip to help your baby cry less — carry her. Research shows that babies who are carried more often don't cry as much as other babies.

Preparing Your Baby's Bath

- ☆ Plan for your baby's bath. Get everything ready before you start the bath. This makes bathing your baby easier and safer.
- ☆ If you can, turn down your water heater to 120 degrees. Babies can get scalded easily. Fill the sink or tub you're going to bathe your baby in with warm water. Always test the water with your wrist or elbow. The water should be comfortably warm, not hot.
- ☆ Make sure you have everything you need for the bath. You can keep mild soap, cotton balls and a clean diaper in a shoebox or other container. Then you can bring the box in with the towel and washcloth to the room where you bathe your baby. When everything is ready, get your baby.
- ☆ If you forget an item, you will have to carry your baby with you. This is hard to do when the baby is wet and slippery.
- ☆ ***Never leave your baby alone in water.*** It's best not to answer the phone or the doorbell during your baby's bath. If you do, pick up your baby and carry her with you. If your spouse, relatives or friends call you often, let them know when your baby's bath time is. Tell them you won't take phone calls at that time.

Bathing Your Baby

Your baby needs sponge baths at first. Give your baby a sponge bath until her umbilical cord or his circumcision, if any, is healed. After that, your baby can have a tub bath.

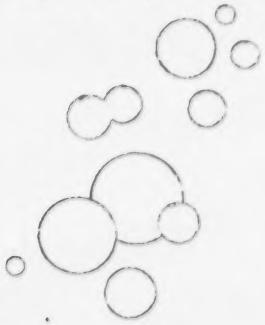
Fill a bowl or basin with warm water: Use your wrist or elbow to check the water to make sure it is just the right temperature. Be sure the water is not too cold or too hot. Very hot water can be dangerous.

Take the bowl of warm water and a soft washcloth to the place where you are going to bathe your baby.

Pick a place for bathing that is warm and not drafty. You don't want your baby to get chilled. You can put your baby on a bath towel in her crib or any other flat surface. If you put your baby on a table, make sure she cannot roll off. Do not leave your baby alone, not even for a few seconds.

Take your baby's clothes off. Put the washcloth in the warm water and squeeze it out until it is just damp. Use the washcloth to gently wipe your baby all over. Wipe her head and neck, behind her ears, and between her fingers and toes.

Your newborn does not need to have a bath every day. Just clean her face, neck and diaper area whenever they are dirty.



Be Gentle When Bathing Your Baby

- ☆ You can use your bathtub, kitchen sink or a plastic baby tub. Use something to line the tub to keep your baby from slipping. If you use a foam liner for a tub, it needs to be dried out after each use. This prevents the growth of germs. Or you can line the tub with a bath towel. Be sure to wash and dry it after each use.
- ☆ Use a clean, damp washcloth, without soap, to wash her face. Gently wash the outside and back of each ear and wash and dry under her neck.
- ☆ Don't use bubble bath or detergents in the bathwater since these may cause rashes.
- ☆ Use damp cotton balls or cotton pads to gently wipe your baby's eyes before you put her in the tub. Be sure to support your baby's head when she is in the tub.
- ☆ Wash your baby's hair and scalp very gently, using soap or a baby shampoo. Do this only once or twice a week. Rinse with a damp cloth. Make sure that soapsuds don't get into her eyes. Wash her body, starting with the chest. After washing with a soapy washcloth, rinse the washcloth and rinse her off. Pat your baby dry with a bath towel. Always keep her covered and warm when she is wet.

Information Resources for Families

Families who are enrolled in the WIC program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) can get information on breastfeeding and nutrition at the local WIC office. Families eligible for WIC receive nutrition counseling and supplemental foods such as milk and cereal. To find the WIC office nearest you, call your state health department or visit the WIC Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic/.

For information about early childhood education initiatives, you may contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit the Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/teachingouryoungest/.

To learn about child care options, you may contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Aware by phone at 1-800-424-2246 or visit their Web site at www.childcareaware.org/.

For more information and resources on postpartum depression, breastfeeding, and many other women's health issues call The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-9662 (1-800-994-WOMAN).

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Coming Next Month

Child Care Choices
1 Month Checkups
Your Newborn Turns 1 Month
How to Handle Colic
...and much more!

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